



Christians in Engineering

Resourcing Christian engineers

Perspective

The Journal
of the CiE

Spring 2012



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Aims of Christians in Engineering

1. To link Christian engineers and help them to maintain a consistently Christian stance in their work.
2. To enable Christian engineers to develop a thought-out Christian approach to professional issues.
3. To encourage Christian engineers to exert a constructive Christian influence in the engineering profession.
4. To support and encourage Christians who are entering the engineering profession.
5. To supply insight to engineering related missionary work.

Please send contributions for the next issue of the Journal to Mike Cowan at the address above.

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Editorial

Mike Cowan

The articles in this edition record a variety of thought, testimony and action both social and evangelistic. The editor is grateful to all those who have either written articles or identified articles for reprinting.

Transform Work UK have published an excellent booklet – ‘Managing Workplace Stress – A Christian Perspective’. It is planned to post a copy to all our members with this Journal.

In our previous Journal I suggested we look at the situation in which we live and when I started to plan this issue the riots in some UK cities had just taken place. The result is my article ‘Re-Engineering Britain’. If it reads like a submission on an MSc topic please forgive me – I have now completed four modules of my ‘Sustainable Development’ course!

The report on our committee and prayer meetings reflects the concern of its members to match our vision with God’s will and the realities in which we operate. Some specific decisions need to be made in the near future and our first article, by Paul Darley, addresses this. The report of our recent committee meetings also makes mention of this.

Please feel free to offer comments on our journal and to provide articles for future editions.

You may contact me at mike@christianengineers.org.uk.

Standing Together

Paul Darley

“You work to a tenth of an inch”, I quipped to my civil engineer friend, “but we mechanical engineers work to a thousandth of an inch!” My triumph was short-lived when our aeronautical friend retorted, “Well, we work to a ten-thousandth of an inch!” Like the *rock-paper-scissors* game, the civil engineer trumped the aeronautical engineer by saying, “And what good would aircraft be without airports built by civil engineers?”

We three were the closest of friends from our first day at university, and throughout those student years we prayed together every morning and almost as frequently repeated our joke about the relative tolerances to which our respective engineering disciplines commonly work. Of course, this was always said in jest and we never fell out over it.

But history shows that too often great rifts result from viewing pretty much the same thing (in this case engineering) from slightly different perspectives (in this case engineering disciplines). How often have believers in the same Lord Jesus Christ divided over issues like how and when we should be baptised, the sequence of events at Christ’s return, or whether we are intended to understand the early chapters of Genesis as a literal description of events or a spiritual lesson about our origins. The style of church music has alone caused more rifts than most of us have had hot dinners!

The problem is that although we all agree on the importance of unity (which is stressed throughout the New testament), our innate desire to have people agree with us (even on issues with few references in Scripture) all too often takes on an even greater importance.

In His parable of the wheat and the weeds, Jesus makes it clear that although there will be a judgement and separation between those who are his and those who are not, now is not the time for this, and we are not the people to do it. So clear is Jesus’ instruction to us not to judge and separate that Archbishop Trench wrote, ‘The prohibition not to root out weeds is so clear, so express, that whenever in Church history we meet something that looks like a carrying out of this proposal, we may be tolerably sure that it is not

wheat making war on weeds, but weeds seeking to root out wheat.’

As a member of Christians in Engineering, you are standing together with others – others who may be doing a very different kind of job in a different engineering discipline, and who may hold very different theological views and attend a very different church from yours.

Standing together is important. There are Christians in engineering whose employers require them to make false claims about products, to lie to subordinates, to dismiss staff without appropriate reason, to give or take bribes etc. There are Christians in engineering who fear redundancy, a pay cut, demotion, or an enforced job change. There are Christians in engineering who would value guidance in their career direction, or need help reviewing where God wants them to be. There are Christians in engineering who are disillusioned and disappointed with their church leaders’ failure to support them in the workplace, or even recognise that they are missionaries in one of the most spiritually needy mission fields in the world.

But could CiE be *more* helpful to its members by working more closely with – or even merging with – another association of Christian professionals? To put the question another way, is there a good reason for CiE to be a separate entity? The answer may be ‘yes’ if we had sufficient members to be able to offer a range of events and resources specifically targeted at engineers, but it may be ‘no’ as we do not.

So the CiE committee is considering all options in order to be more helpful organisation for you. What do you think? Do you think you are best served by CiE remaining as it is? Would you be disappointed if CiE ceased to be a separate and distinct body? Do please let me know!

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Re-Engineering Britain?

Mike Cowan

Introduction

Jesus described himself as ‘The Way, the Truth and the Life’ (John 14:6). Could we, in a more limited sense, read this as ‘I am the Purpose and the Truth that leads to true Prosperity’?

My early learning on the principles of design emphasised the need to define the purpose of the item to be designed. From that point the contribution of every component could be questioned and optimised.

If we are to make sense of Britain’s current crises it would be best to go back to first principles: What is the purpose of Life?

In search of a consensus statement the USA Constitution offers a right to ‘The Pursuit of Happiness’. The concept as interpreted in the film ‘The pursuit of Happiness’¹ seems to match what has been described as ‘The American Dream’. It is based on the real life of Chris Gardner, a highly intelligent black American who moves from poverty to become a prosperous stockbroker. As packaged within the film his hard work, personable nature and other abilities are employed, not so much to provide an excellent service to his clients, but rather to advance his career and care for his son. The real Chris Gardner is recorded elsewhere as being a Philanthropist, but there exists an all-too-easy shift from service to a self-serving materialism in which we believe that possessions are both necessary and will bring happiness.

Britain has followed a similarly materialist path to the USA and crises have resulted in both cultures. For Jesus eternal life is defined as, ‘*that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*’ (John 17:3). Thus, relationship is central and from it derives our objective to become more like him and operate in this world according to God’s purpose and within his design for us.

Aim

Suppression of these truths has led to a materialism that subverts our true purpose and substitutes affluence. This pattern for the suppression of truth and the subversion of purpose is recorded in Paul's letter to the Romans (in 1:18 and 1:24). The aim of this article is to investigate whether this pattern can be identified in some of the components of Britain's situation and our own lives.

Politics

The expenses scandal has exposed politicians to be as open to selfish materialism as any other group. On another level, if their main purpose is re-election they become subject not only to the electorate, but also the media and the financial institutions. Given the variety of interest groups it is difficult for politicians to present coherent policies that will reward them with re-election. Uncomfortable truths have to be suppressed and a consensus negotiated. Some of the more specific challenges follow.

Economics

The 2008 financial crisis has been investigated in the documentary film 'Inside Job'². It is clear that the root cause of the crash was suppression of truths regarding the financial risks being taken and a purpose limited to the generation of short term profits and bonuses. The film highlights the close relationship between the financial institutions of the USA and successive political administrations:

- Financial 'Derivatives' were recognised as a danger and an attempt was made to regulate them in 1998. Presidents Clinton and Bush, with their financial advisers, refused to introduce regulation.
- Financial Institutions were allowed to take increasing risks while the argument was made that the spreading of risk around the financial system together with insurance provided by AIG provided full security.
- When the system failed the USA taxpayer had to support AIG and the US Government allowed some of this money to pay out insurance that Goldman Sachs had taken out to cover the failure of

Consolidated Debt Obligations it did not even own. The taxpayer was thus subsidising gambling.

The true situation was recognised by a few, some of whom resigned from their own role within it, but the film demonstrates that even the academic world was enrolled into the task of obscuring (suppressing?) the risks. A professor in a prestigious university could earn good money for writing positive reports. One such report gave a positive account of the Icelandic Banks shortly before they failed.

So how should we Christians view all this? Jesus advises us to ‘use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourself, so that when it is gone you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings’ (Luke 16:9). Jesus seems to say that while we cannot operate outside of the world’s financial systems we can use these systems to good purposes and thus grow in our friendship with him.

Peter Heslam has written a booklet entitled ‘Transforming Capitalism – Entrepreneurship and the Renewal of Thrift’³. Heslam identifies the power of Capitalism to improve the lot of many while identifying the need for discipline. In addition to the need for regulation it needs to move the emphasis from consumption to thrift. Thrift does not, for Heslam, mean endlessly saving money, but avoiding waste. Money should be used for good purpose and the word ‘thrift’ derives from the word ‘thrive’. He quotes John Wesley who said, ‘*Having, first, gained all you can, and secondly saved all you can, then give all you can.*’ Here, saving is avoiding waste rather than ‘laying up treasure’.

Linked to economics there are particular issues with world trade and globalisation and this is discussed under the heading ‘Law and Justice’.

Social

Ian Duncan Smith, Chairman of the Centre for Social Justice, recognised the presence of a ‘broken society’ some years ago. For many the recent riots within Britain’s cities are not a surprise, though the range of participants probably was. When studying for a post

graduate certificate in education I attended a lecture that suggested we had no right to teach ‘middle class standards’. There was some truth in that challenge, but nothing was offered as a basis for morality. This was in the 1970s and the Christian basis for morality was no longer accepted as a norm. Britain was entering the moral wilderness of rights without responsibilities and individualism without identity. The big questions about life were left unanswered and said to be unanswerable.

Thus, where Jesus teaches that men and women were designed for a close and committed relationship with each other, the atheist is under no law – natural or supernatural. Jesus taught within a religious culture controlled by rules, unwilling to adapt to changing conditions and lacking compassion. Jesus nevertheless remains our role-model, for he spoke to both the respectable and the broken within that society. Patrick Regan works within the anarchic gang culture of London. His work has shown that, presented with a world where there is acceptance and purpose, an individual’s life can be changed. His book⁴ contains a number of testimonies to Jesus’ power to redeem lives.

Technology

It could be said that Technology is ethically neutral. Maybe so, but its application by humans is far from ethically neutral. The linked issues of energy supplies and climate change have not yet reached crisis proportions but, with some reluctance, I recognise that they will. Kenneth Boulding, who was JF Kennedy’s environmental adviser, has been quoted as saying, ‘Anyone who believes in indefinite growth in anything physical, on a physically finite planet, is either mad – or an economist’. In that this paper is written for engineers it is appropriate to discuss environmental issues under the heading of technology!

Many environmentalists identify material consumption and population as the main threats to the environment and look to technology for a solution. Thus, I believe, we should first challenge the assumption of unlimited growth both in population and in material affluence. Jesus says little about procreation, but much about the idolatry of affluence and the accumulation of material treasure. In the context of ‘worry’ he

says, ‘So do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?”. For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.’ (Matthew 6:31-33).

These and other basic physical requirements for the human being to flourish have been listed as UN Millennium Development Goals. However, it is often the purpose of commercial and other advertising to present the acquisition of material objects as the means to fulfil deeper human needs. Gerald Coates, an advertising executive turned Christian preacher has described the advertising process as ‘taking away your self esteem and returning it at the price of the product.’

As engineers we often work within a pagan culture and it is difficult to know where to draw a boundary on the environmental impact within our work. Perhaps the starting point is to avoid suppression of the truth and to stand up for those environmental boundaries that are already in place within the legal system or the codes and standards under which our organisation works. From there we can develop both our understanding, our behaviour and our message for others.

Law and Justice

In secular democracies laws are created by consensus or lobby. The result is not necessarily just or true. Thus, while the new equality laws may not directly discriminate against a Christian view of marriage they will make it difficult to present that view as an aspiration different from same-sex unions. There is, here, an attempt by some to suppress even secular scientific truth.

Of greater concern throughout the Bible has been financial injustice. Currently there is a growing differential between the incomes of the richest and the poorest. There is further injustice both in world trade and what passes as international aid. Ken Gibson, documents the ways in which aid from rich countries can offer more material benefits to the donor country than it delivers to the intended receiver.⁵ Aid is often tied

to an agenda that includes provision of trading advantage to the donor. Thankfully, Gibson is able to commend some of the work done through the UK Government.

Perhaps the greatest indictment of this age lies in the claim that the largest sector of international trade is now people trafficking. The writer of Revelation, listing the items traded by the ‘merchants of the earth’, concludes that list with ‘...and bodies and souls of men’ (Revelation 18:13). Unregulated world trade has, over the centuries, repeatedly descended into the trading of slaves, addictive drugs, or weapons of war.

Yet World Trade could be the major instrument for reducing poverty around the world. Recall the words of Jesus: ‘Use unrighteous Mammon to make friends in heaven’. The support of Fair Trade initiatives would be a good start. In the bigger picture the purposes of world trade needs to be fully visible, reformed and then applied. Impossible? It took a lifetime to persuade Britain to end the slave trade, but the USA Marshall plan revived a war damaged Europe in a few years.

Environment

According to a review in The Daily Telegraph, Mark Lynas, in his book ‘The God Species’⁶, underlines the fact that man has now conquered the world and points out that ‘The first responsibility of a conquering army is always to govern’. For readers of Genesis this is not new. So why are we so reluctant to change our behaviour to save the planet? Why is the dialogue about appropriate actions often shallow?

Scott Peck, talking about human feelings linked to deep loss, quotes five emotional stages: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance.⁷ These stages can be detected in many situations, especially the tendency to deny anything that genuinely challenges a precious expectation or value. I would add that we can feel helpless under the causes and complexity of climate change. We can start with prayer to the one who delegated such responsibility to us.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to look for a pattern where truth is suppressed and, as a result, good purposes are subverted. If that pattern exists, what should we do? My Bible reading this morning provides a clue. In the context of expected persecution Jesus said, ‘So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops’ (Matthew 10:26-28). If Jesus can whisper to us both the diagnosis and the cure, it would be selfish not to share it.

Notes and References

1. Gabriele Muccino, film ‘The Pursuit of Happyness’, Columbia Pictures, 2006.
2. Charles H Ferguson, film ‘Inside Job’, Sony Picture Classics, 2010.
3. Peter Heslam, ‘Transforming Capitalism – Entrepreneurship and the Renewal of Thrift’, Grove Books, 2010.
4. Patrick Regan, ‘Fighting Chance. Tackling Britain’s Gang Culture’, Hodder & Stoughton, 2010.
5. Ken Gibson, ‘Too much aid, not enough help’, Columba Press, 2010.
6. Mark Lynas, ‘The God Species’, Fourth Estate, 2011.
7. Scott Peck, ‘Denial of the Soul’, Pocket Books, 1997, p161.

Bible quotations are taken from the NIV. I have used the helpful acronym ‘PESTLE’ to identify six important areas of human activity.

Postscript – Space for the Good News

Reflecting on the above I am reminded of the organisation ‘Moral Rearmament’ that operated in UK in the years immediately following the second world war. In one sense their message was ‘SAD’ – Severe, Admonishing and Difficult. Jesus encourages us to accept the truth and turn from lies. Our culture has openly rebelled against the first and tenth commandments. From that point there is an offer of forgiveness with opportunity for a new start with a new power to change if we are willing to repent, believe and commit ourselves to him. Some truths about our purpose, on their own, may not be Good News, but they may provide a starting point in our role as prophets and evangelists.

Painting behind the Radiator

Paul Darley

Sir Henry Royce said, ‘Strive for perfection in everything you do. Take the best that exists and make it better. When it does not exist, design it.’ On another occasion he said, ‘Small things make perfection, but perfection is not a small thing.’ It is said that Royce once overheard a factory worker mutter, “that’ll do” – and he sacked him on the spot!

The 90:10 principle says that the last 10% of a job takes 90% of the time. In my business I have been advised to leave the final 10% of jobs undone on the basis that few clients will notice the difference. I won’t do this.

People say I could make more money by leaving the final 10% undone. I wonder. In 10 years as a consultant, 85% of my work (by value) has been repeat business or awarded as a result of a recommendation without me having to advertise or quote against competition. Maybe this is partly due to attending to the final 10% of assignments. Maybe the time I spend on this final 10% is no greater than the time I would otherwise have to spend finding new clients and winning new contracts. I don’t know.

But that’s not the point. For me, it’s not a commercial issue but a spiritual one. God never looked at poorly finished creation and said, “that’ll do.” Jesus never left some people 90% healed in order to partly heal a few more people. He never told mediocre parables. He didn’t give us a 90% salvation. Thank God for that!

This is what my cousin calls ‘painting behind the radiator.’ When asked, “Who will see that?” he replies, “God will!”

This attitude has enabled my cousin to build a successful business manufacturing otherwise-unobtainable automotive components and carrying out ‘nut and bolt refurbishments’ of pre-war MGs. And it is

the key to him being able to create a replica 1935 MG R-Type from the ground up – something never done before because it was considered far too difficult. This is work that honours Jesus, the Carpenter and Creator. God is an engineer who pays meticulous attention to detail.

Another paragon of excellence, Cunard, has at its heart the following policy statement ‘to be known, practiced and energised by all crew members’:

1. We respect each other as individuals. We treat our guests and our fellow crew members as we would like to be treated ourselves.
2. We are always positive with our guests and colleagues. We speak positively and never make negative comments.
3. We are knowledgeable about our ships and services.
4. We exceed our guests’ expectations. We find a way to get it done. We never give up and we go the extra mile to please our guests.
5. We maintain formality in our service style.
6. We smile. We maintain positive eye contact. We greet our guests. We tell them “I will be happy to do so” and “It will be a pleasure.”
7. We use correct body language. We are pleasant, energetic and welcoming.
8. We are immaculate in our appearance. We wear proper footwear that is clean and polished. We take pride in our personal grooming.
9. We support and assist our colleagues. We do everything possible to please our guests and help our colleagues do so as well.
10. We use proper telephone etiquette. We answer in three rings and we have a smile in our voice. If necessary, we ask if we may put our customers on hold. We eliminate transfer calls whenever possible.
11. We always speak English in our guest areas whether there are guests nearby or not.
12. We never say “no”; we offer alternatives. We say “I will be pleased to check.” We suggest alternatives. We call our supervisor or manager if we feel we cannot satisfy our guest’s needs.

In our work as engineers and our lives as disciples of Christ, should we not strive to deliver this standard of service for the glory of God? (You can see examples of my cousin’s work at octagonservices.co.uk.)

A Quiet Retirement?

Richard Riggs

I'm a low flyer. I started as a physics lecturer, then spent most of my working life in electronics engineering. I decided that technology was what I was good at, so that's what I did, rather than trying to climb the management ladder. So life has been relatively stress-free, if modestly paid. Meanwhile, care for the planet has been a concern that dates back a long time, and has grown through the years. It was helped greatly by association with A Rocha, as they supplied the theology to back it up. So after retirement I put more effort into ways of greening our church, but I could find little interest. Having worked in the physical sciences rather than life sciences, I could only talk about boring things, like reducing utility bills, and I could not offer attractions like nature walks.

Then I heard about an embryo Community Action Group here in Abingdon, and thought my skills might be useful. Oxfordshire has a good number of CAGs, and ours had started as a few people meeting regularly over a light meal to talk about environmental issues. It moved on to regular open meetings, on a variety of subjects. Then we thought about where to go from there. We decided to focus on a few key areas, one of which was energy. Technically that suited me best, but I had not intended to take responsibility for it. But that was what happened! And then... it was hard to know what could be done that would make any difference in a town of 35,000 people. I didn't know where to start.

I don't remember where the idea of a flagship project came from, or hydro power from the Thames. But plenty of people have watched the tons of water pouring over the weir and wondered why its power was not being harnessed. As soon as I started talking about it, I found people getting interested. Then there was a period of about six months when helpful events started popping up in front of me, and I felt I knew what to do. There were meetings at just the right time, and I met the right people. Then I sensed that it was time to take the plunge and see if anyone wanted to join me in making it happen. To my surprise and

relief ('oh you of little faith...') six people responded.

So now we have a company with seven directors. I can only see it as God's provision – these are the people he wants me to work with. There is much to do, and we are quite a mixture, but it is good to have a variety of skills and talents, and we seem to get on quite well. I am prepared to do a large part of the work, because the others are all earning a living to varying degrees, but I also have to learn to involve them and ask for help as much as possible, and to see that decisions are properly talked through.

I should say a bit about the technology. Low head and high flow means a lot of water moving relatively slowly, so the equipment is big. The choice of technologies is quite limited, and the preferred one for this site is the Archimedes screw – simple and robust, and fish friendly. We expect to have three screws, each one over 3 metres in diameter and weighing about 10 tonnes. So it will be highly visible, and that is a good thing. It offers a very graphic example of renewable energy here on our doorstep, at a spot where many people pass by. They stop now on the weir to look at the water, and we hope they will find rotating screws even more fascinating. The maximum output should be nearly 200 kW, and the long term average nearly 100 kW. That is small compared with what the town uses, but its lifetime should be many decades.

The cost will be over a million pounds, but thanks to the Feed-In Tariffs and low interest rates it looks like it will be an attractive investment. We are a social enterprise, and the company's legal basis will require that a significant part of the income goes back into the community. That word 'community' keeps coming up when we talk about our aims, and it means different things to different people. We want it to be seen as a local asset, not something imposed from outside, so we hope that most of the shares will be bought locally. Local shareholders should have an interest in what is done with the community share of the earnings. We need to be rather careful in deciding how the income will be divided between the investors and the local community. To raise so

much money locally, it must look attractive to an investor, but we want the community benefits to be as generous as possible. The community dimension is important – in fact you could say that getting that relationship right is key, and the rest is just project management.

How is it going? Anything I write now will be out of date by the time this is printed (at least I hope it will!). The web site abingdonhydro.co.uk should be a bit more up to date. The first phase is all about bureaucracy – planning permission, Environment Agency licence, etc. Negotiations with the EA are being handled by one of the people I met – Brendan, who is a Christian and offers special rates to community groups because he wants to encourage them. The next phase is the detailed planning – the engineering, architecture, project planning, business plan, etc. It adds up to quite a complex project, that will keep me busy for some time. My long-suffering wife would have preferred a quiet retirement, but I can only say that there are times when it seems that the Lord is saying, ‘not yet, I have this job for you to do’. One of the nice things has been the people I have met, concerned about climate change, wanting to make a difference in their local community, and willing to work together on it.

There is a question that bothers me: suppose I had persisted with the church? It is large, with a lot of talent, so what if I had been able to persuade the church to endorse and encourage this project? A good team could have been assembled, and it would be clearly identified as a local church project. Assuming it was set up for the benefit of the community, it would give the church a very positive image. Church members would invest, and would be able to help with the publicity. It would produce surplus income, and the church would be able to influence the choice of which projects to support. There will be an information centre at the site, which could have explained why the church had taken on this project, and how belief in a creator God motivates us to look after his creation and use its resources well. Just suppose...

Editor’s Note: You can contact Richard at richard.riggs@physics.org.

Cross Cultural Kingdom Work

David Burgess

At Church we have recently been considering Acts. Praise God for the way he worked by his Holy Spirit through many men and women to further His Kingdom from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends the earth! It is interesting to note that many of the believers and those at the frontline of sharing the good news of Jesus also had a profession. The Apostle Paul made the point of telling us about his tent making work (1 Corinthians 9). Everything Paul lived for was for God's glory and for the gospel. His work gave him credibility amongst the Gentiles and enabled him to identify with those he preached to. Supporting himself gave him a hearing amongst people who otherwise might accuse him of preaching for his own gain.

Have you ever thought about your Engineering profession as the 'Frontline' of gospel ministry? We are in unique God-given places of work. For some of our colleagues we might be the only contact they have with any Christian.

This is why I am very encouraged to read the letter related below from Tom Ashworth who has used his engineering skills in a cross-cultural setting. Tom has been 'standing in the gap'; the work he has done demonstrates God's concern for the poor. At the same time his work has acted as a platform allowing him to encourage and share with local believers.

I hope you also will be encouraged in reading this and consider how God is using you in your frontline – whether it is in Jerusalem or 'to the ends of the earth'.

Reconstruction in Post-Soviet Central Asia – Tom Ashworth

On 10th June 2010 violence broke out in Osh, the second city of Kyrgyzstan. The exact causes remain unclear, but after the first day it became clear that it was developing an ethnic theme. Fear and

accusations were spread on wings by rumours, and ethnic Kyrgyz poured in from the surrounding countryside to aid their kin against a perceived Uzbek attack. With the aid of complicit government forces hundreds of Uzbek houses were burnt, violence, often in the name of pre-emptive attacks, spread across the southern region of Kyrgyzstan. 400,000 Uzbeks fled for the border of Uzbekistan, which reluctantly opened its borders.

Within a few days the violence was over. More than 400 people had been killed and 1500 homes had been destroyed. Within a few weeks refugees were returning home to find whole mahallas (housing estates) burnt and destroyed. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Red Cross, Save the Children and other relief organisations moved in to provide tents, food, clothing and psychological support.

A year before I had been working for a small NGO in Osh sent by a Christian mission organisation. When I saw the events unfold on the internet I was devastated. Through contacts in Osh I was able to join a French NGO called ACTED which was working to reconstruct the houses across the south of Kyrgyzstan. I soon learnt that disaster relief work is incredibly chaotic. My job rôle was unclear and I had to develop it myself. I worked together with other long-term workers hired by ACTED to work with freshly hired local staff to help manage the rebuilding.

The UNHCR leadership was fickle and showed little construction knowledge. Initially they planned to rebuild houses according to the number of people living at one address. Finally it became clear there was not enough money for this, so all addresses were provided with a standard two-room 28 square metre brick house, even though there might be more than 10 people living at the address.

We trained the local engineers to survey every destroyed address and plan where the new shelter would be built, where possible using existing foundations to save on materials. The new shelter was to be built to meet earthquake safety regulations and was to include some

insulation, which in the cold winters is vital, but which local houses so rarely include!

The government authorities were a constant hindrance, delaying permission to construct, demanding quicker construction, criticising designs, etc. Time pressure was constantly a factor, because mortar walls had to be completed before freezing temperatures came. Materials deliveries were often delayed due to factory capacity, border issues (China had a 10 day national holiday, during which the border was closed, blocking transport of windows and doors) and disputes about the Bill of Quantities did not help progression.

Keeping track of the construction progress of the 400 houses ACTED was constructing in Osh became my job. Daily I talked to the engineers about the houses in their areas and the problems they were encountering. Every house has individual issues, whether engineering, materials or personal issues with the house owner or builders. Many Kyrgyz felt they were not being dealt with fairly. Many houses were not fully destroyed and it took the UNHCR several months to decide what measures could be taken to economically assist these people.

The work was emotionally hard, involving long hours in which house owners who had experienced violence and lost relatives would break down crying. Finally at the end of November all the houses were rebuilt and the people thanked us by holding feasts. Leaving the engineering team was also hard. Over a short time we had created a close knit team and they appreciated our leadership and hard work, often on wages not much more than their own.

Tensions in Osh remain high, and there has been discrimination against the Uzbeks in the search for justice after the violence. Many have left for Russia. However, long-term workers there report that they are much more open to the gospel than before. Pray that the peace continues, that conditions become fairer for them and that the local church grows amongst the Uzbeks as well as the Kyrgyz and is a model for brotherly love across ethnic divides.

My MGC Roadster

Paul Darley

Cars have always been my passion. My parents tell me that my first word wasn't mummy or daddy but 'tar tar', meaning car. But it took me until my mid-fifties to buy a sports car. With relatives having worked for Morris and MG, or whatever the company was subsequently called, it had to be an MG. My boyhood dream of owning a C had never diminished, so it had to be a C, and it had to be a Roadster so I could experience the wind in my hair (not that I have much hair now). I've now owned my 1968 MGC for a year and I find that I have learnt some surprising lessons.

Fortunately, my ignorance of what to look for was matched by my cousin's knowledge on the subject as he runs an MG restoration and parts manufacturing business and has refurbished two MGCs from the ground up. Together we looked at several MGCs. One stood out from the crowd, so soon a deal was done. The benefits of this one was that it had been carefully restored and well maintained. What could go wrong?

What went wrong was that it came to an ignominious halt on the way home – in the outside lane of the M25 in the Friday evening rush hour, causing the M25 to be closed while the Police pushed it onto the hard shoulder and told me to jump over the barrier. Fortunately I noticed I was on a bridge, so I didn't! One call to the AA was all it took for the Police and the Highways Agency to be mobilised as well as me being rescued. I wonder how many people in the current economic climate have found that quite unexpectedly their life has ground to a halt and they need help in ways they never imagined they would. We read in Isaiah 41:13, 'For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, "Do not fear; I will help you."'

After a misdiagnosis by my local garage that the alternator was fine and the voltage regulator was faulty, it took me two months to find the real fault and rectify it. It was a blown diode in the alternator. A valuable

lesson learnt already: never use a non-specialist for work on a classic car. The world is full of amateur philosophers, all confident that they know life's answers, but the true Specialist is the One who made us and really knows how we tick. We read in Psalm 139, 'O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.'

Now the car went well. But it didn't stop well! The brake servo had failed, probably through lack of use before I bought it. Another two months passed before I was on the road with a refurbished brake system. And another lesson learnt: it really helps to belong to a group of people with similar cars because someone will have experienced the same problem and found the solution. As Christians we need each other, which is why Hebrews 10:25 tells us to 'not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.'

I've really enjoyed MG Car Club events. What a great way to build bridges and make new friends! For the first time in years I've experienced what it's like to be an outsider being welcomed into a close-knit group of friends who all know the ropes when I don't. It has revolutionised my expectations of my unchurched colleagues coming to church! All too often we expect people to behave and then believe before we let them belong. Perhaps we need to let people belong before they will believe and change their behaviour.

If you've never driven on a track, it really is quite an experience! No speed cameras, and no risk of cars coming the other way or children running into the road! My first track day was at Donington, where there were mentors in the pits for novices like me and instructors on hand to sit in the car. There's nothing like one-to-one coaching. In the church we use the term 'disciples' – but how good are we at discipling? We're good at arranging meetings where we hope to pack people in and talk to them from the front, but what about spending time with people one-to-one so we can address their specific needs?

One of the issues I've had to grapple with is whether to maintain the car's highly original spec or make improvements. It was restored in 1993 with meticulous attention to originality so whilst just about everything could be improved, I am reluctant to change it to the point that it no longer gives the 1960s driving experience I bought it for. I have compromised in a few areas where items could readily be changed back if I want. Fortunately the Word of God is unchanging. But the world around is changing with alarming speed, so we need to grapple with how it should be applied today. We won't all agree on what is the appropriate application of Scripture in every case, so we have to choose: do we part company from those whom we feel are incorrectly interpreting Scripture, or is compromising and remaining in fellowship with them a greater priority? A clue: there's much more in Scripture about loving one another and getting along together even when we don't agree than there is about almost any other subject.

Hallmarks of Design

A Review of Prof Stuart Burgess' Book published by Day One, 2000

Geoff Enoch

Let me explain a little of how I came to read this book. After forty years of commitment to God through my local church, more problems than I was fit for and more unanswered prayer than my faith would stand, I walked out of church one Sunday morning with no intention of going back. I ceased to serve, study, pray or have any part in Christian things.

Two years on, a 'saint' from my old church gave me this book for my 60th birthday, and such was its 'design' content that the engineer in me made me read it. Should it have been a 'spiritual' book I should have discarded it.

It must be said that even in my darkest moments I have never subscribed to the school of thinking that this remarkable planet just happened into being by some cosmic accident. That theory is contrary

to everything I know about design and construction.

So I read the book. I am so glad that I did, and I recommend it to you. Whatever your state of faith, this book will have you amazed at God's infinite creation. Have you ever considered the intricacies and mechanics of controlled flight and how ridiculous it is that 'evolution' brought this about by chance in some creatures and not others? How utterly ridiculous it is that we should believe that when a man sits down to design a plane he starts with a rivet (evolution). We, especially as engineers, know that he starts with a concept and then works backwards until finally the rivet gets specified. That is design.

While on the subject of flight, did you know that peacock tail feather are of unique construction in order to replicate the 'eyes' in its flamboyant tail? And did you know the hummingbird's wings are of a totally different construction to the rest of the bird species? That's why it can fly backwards! That, and the fact that it beats its wings around 80 times per second!!

Flight, however, represents just one chapter. What of the earth? Did you know that water, like other materials, shrinks when cold – but uniquely at 4 degrees Celsius the shrinking stops, and further drops in temperature cause it to expand? This makes it less dense than liquid water, and so ice floats. If it were not to do this, then we have no life in our rivers and lakes come winter time!

Have you ever considered why fruit is only tasty when the seeds are ready to plant, and do you think this chance or design?

Enough. Read the book. If it can touch this hardened heart, it can only encourage yours.

P.S. I now rejoice in a new church and tentative steps of faith and trust.

An Interview with Michael Green

Pod Bhogal

Michael Green is one of the world's leading evangelists and a regular speaker at Christian Union (CU) mission events. He was president of the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (OICCU) and rector of St Aldates's Church, Oxford. He has authored many books including 'Evangelism and the Local Church' and 'Who is this Jesus?' Michael is currently chaplain for the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics. Pod Bhogal asked him about his relationship with UCCF from the days of being part of a CU to his ongoing support and involvement today.

What were the highlights of your year as OICCU president?

There were several. First, I gained experience of Christian leadership in a large and vibrant CU. I also enjoyed time with each new college rep, getting to know them and briefing them. I rejoiced in the regular response to Christ we saw in the evangelistic services. An unusual feature of my year was a large mission to the university, organised by the chaplains. Traditionally, OICCU did not join in these missions because of the mixed theology encountered. But I realised that the man chosen for the mission, Bishop Michael Ramsey, was orthodox and had been much appreciated by OICCU students when he was a professor at Cambridge. So I encouraged OICCU to take people along, then go with them to coffee parties in the college chaplain's rooms and engage in personal conversations. We had carefully chosen evangelists to cover the two Sunday evenings of the mission and we saw a number of people coming to Christ as a result of the whole thing. The 'poaching' appealed to my baser instincts! Finally, the supreme highlight of my year as OICCU president was getting to know the woman member of the exec, Rosemary, who has been my wife for more than fifty years.

What are the biggest differences between your first mission as main speaker and your most recent mission?

My early missions as main speaker were very different from today. In terms of religion, England was vaguely Christian. Morally, the sixties

sexual revolution had not taken place. Socially, the country was still white Anglo-Saxon. Evangelistically, apologetics was less necessary because most people believed in God to some extent and accepted that Jesus was the Son of God. The main task of the evangelist was to help people to see their need, recognise what Christ had done for them, and commit themselves to him. Most conversions took place at the end of evangelistic addresses. Today is a very different scene. The climate is hostile to belief in God, and apologetic issues like atheism, suffering and other faiths have to be addressed. Ours is now a multi-national and multi-faith society, there are almost no acknowledged norms, Islam is resurgent, and students know almost nothing about Jesus – in the schools they gain a smattering of comparative religion, but no clear understanding of any faith, let alone Christianity. Moreover, they are often taught by teachers who scorn all religion. Therefore the evangelistic challenge is largely to remove the obstacles to considering Christianity, explain what it is and why they need it, and get students to join an enquirers course after the mission so that they can, in due course, make an informed decision (although a regular trickle of people are still ready to respond to Christ straight after a mission sermon).

What are the current challenges to fruitful mission on campus?

Current challenges to fruitful mission can be simply told. Firstly, we need to encourage students to be passionate about winning friends for Christ, and feel confident that it can be done. Secondly, there is the challenge of promoting sustained and heartfelt corporate and individual prayer. Thirdly, students need training in how to witness to Christ without losing their friends, and how to lead an enquirer to faith. Fourthly, there needs to be a number of evangelistic meetings during the year so that students do not put all their evangelistic eggs into the basket of one mission week and sign off for the rest of the year. Fifthly, good planning done in good time is essential – it is often done at the last minute. Sixthly, non-Christian students need to hear powerful and intelligent evangelistic speaking that calls for decision. Finally, we should offer two different types of nurture afterwards: one for seekers and one for new believers – their needs are quite different and it is folly to combine them.

How can UCCF CU Staff Workers, churches and supporters be of most help to students in their evangelism?

Supporters can pray and provide finance. But it's not just about prayer and money – those on the ground gain great assurance and peace knowing that they're not in this alone, that there are people standing with them and cheering them on in all they're doing. UCCF supporters are often those who have been Christians for a long time or who have been part of a CU in the past – so they know what it's like to be living and speaking for Jesus. Sometimes these people are family members or friends, or are from home churches – they are able to offer support and discipleship away from campus life, something that is also very important. Staff Workers have an important role in encouraging the group, doing pastoral work with individuals, giving talks and offering advice on the programme, suggesting names of speakers, running post – mission courses (which should not be left in the hands of students, though students can assist) and being careful not to impose their own theological bias on the exec, and not to quench the idealism and inventiveness of student leaders or 'old soldier' them. Churches should offer worship, good teaching, the sacraments, encouragement and food. The importance of food cannot be overestimated. The church can often complement the input of the CU, provide mission opportunities at home and abroad, take on apprentices and in general encourage the students to have a breadth in their commitment that embraces the whole of life – they cannot gain this if their Christian experience is limited to their student colleagues, aged 18-22.

What do you see in CUs today that gives you hope for the future?

I see zeal, inventiveness, prayerfulness and idealism in some quarters of the student scene. I also see massive growth worldwide. IFES has probably been the most successful mission agency in the world in the past fifty years. So I count it an enormous privilege to be involved with students at the end of my ministry – just as I was at the start.

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the UCCF annual review 2011 and is reproduced with permission. IFES refers to The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

A Meal With Jesus

Tim Chester

How did the Son of Man come? Luke 19:10 and Mark 10:45 tell us why he came – ‘to seek and save the lost; to give his life as a ransom for many.’ But how did he come? What was his *modus operandi*? Preaching? Healing? Teaching? He certainly did those things. But Jesus himself says, ‘The Son of Man came eating and drinking’ (Luke 7:34). Eating and drinking – a lot.

New Testament scholar Robert Karris says, ‘In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.’¹ So much so that his enemies accuse him of being ‘a glutton and a drunkard’ – someone who eats too much and drinks too much. ‘The Son of Man’ is a reference to the representative of God’s people, who comes in glory before the Ancient of Days to receive authority over all nations (Daniel 7). What is the Son of Man doing when he comes to earth? The Jews expected him to come with a bang, defeating God’s enemies and vindicating his people. Instead he shares a meal.

Meals are a powerful expression of welcome and friendship in every culture. This is why Jesus’ meals are so significant – they embody God’s grace and enact God’s mission. Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners. Tax collectors were traitors, not only to the nation, but also traitors towards God, for they were collaborators with the Gentile occupiers who had defiled God’s holy land. So the table companions of Jesus led the Pharisees to conclude that he couldn’t be from God (Luke 5:30; 7:39; 15:1-2). A reasonable conclusion – unless God’s grace is so amazing that it allows him to eat with his enemies and unless God’s grace explodes all our expectations (Luke 5:27-39). Meals are central to the mission of Jesus because they embody and enact the grace of God.

Meals still have this power today. What was true in the culture of first century Palestine is still true in the present-day.

In Luke 14, Jesus is eating at the home of a Pharisee. He suggests we shouldn't invite our friends to our parties. Instead we should invite 'the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind' (Luke 14:13). Why? Because God himself invites 'the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame' (Luke 14:21) to his great banquet. Our experience of God's grace should shape our mission. Often we do things for the needy, which is good. However, it puts us in a position of superiority – we are able; they are unable. We may proclaim grace, but it's readily interpreted as 'you should be like me'. But what happens when we eat together? We share food as friends. We sit at the same level around the table. Then we can talk about our shared need of God's grace. We love to run projects, but nobody wants to be someone's 'project'. They want friendship.

We share food as friends. We sit at the same level around the table. Then we can talk about our shared need of God's grace. It's not just that the table is a great context for community and mission. Food is central to who we are, how we relate to God and to the story of salvation.

Food reminds us of our dependence on other people. We are tied into a network of farmers, traders, shopkeepers, cooks, families, traditions of gastronomy. Above all we are dependent on God. We are finite beings who need sustenance to sustain us. We need to 'refuel'. But food is so much more than fuel. Think of all your favourite foods. Steak and chips. Thai green curry. Crumble and custard. It didn't have to be this way – biscuits would have sufficed to sustain our lives. But God is ridiculously lavish in his creativity and generosity. God's first act after creating humanity was to present us with a menu: the fruit of all the trees in the garden. Every meal is an opportunity to receive God's good gifts with thankfulness – perhaps we need to refresh the practice of saying 'grace' before meals as an expression of our dependence and God's generosity – and food is an opportunity for human creativity and generosity in the image of the Creator.

But food is also at the heart of our rejection of God. The very first act

of rebellion was an act of eating. Ever since that time, our relationship with food often goes wrong, because our relationship with God has gone wrong. We find comfort in food instead of refuge in God. We use food – or avoid food – to make ourselves desirable so others worship us. Our fractured relationships and greed mean many in our world go without food. We over-eat. We under-eat. Food is integral to our humanity, so it's no surprise to find that our brokenness shows up in our relationship to food.

Against this backdrop of food-gone-wrong, God promises a feast. Again and again in the Bible salvation is pictured as a feast with God. When God leads the Israelites out of Egypt, the leaders of the people are invited up to Mount Sinai to eat and drink with God (Exodus 24:9-11). The rescue from slavery in Egypt – the defining act of Israelite identity – is itself commemorated in a meal, the meal of Passover. At the high point of Israelite history, in the reign of Solomon, we are told 'the people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy' (1 Kings 4:20). Even when things begin to unravel, God promises another meal on a mountain, 'a feast of rich food for all people' (Isaiah 25:6-8). On this occasion death itself will be on the menu and God will swallow it up. This is an eternal feast that no one need ever leave. Jesus provides a foretaste of this feast when he feeds the five thousand. Here is a feast which need never end. Indeed there's more food at the end than there was at the beginning. It's a pointer to the fulfilment of God's promise: that one day we will feast forever in his presence.

So the meals of Jesus represent something bigger. They represent God's coming world. But at same time they give that new reality substance. They're the real thing in miniature. Food is stuff; it's not ideas. It's something you put in your mouth, something you taste, something you eat. And meals are more than food – they're social occasions that represent friendship, community, welcome.

Our invitation to the feast of God comes at a price: the precious blood of Jesus his Son. We are outsiders, enemies, excluded. But Jesus takes

the judgment we deserve. He becomes the ultimate outsider – pushed out of the world onto the cross; forsaken by his Father. As a result we become insiders, friends, included. The invitation goes out to all.

It's not an accident that at the heart of what it means to be the church is a meal. Jesus told us to remember him not in a pattern of words, but in a meal (scholars believe communion was celebrated in the early church as part of a meal).

The film 'Little Miss Sunshine' is the story of a girl, Olive, who by default gets through to the regional final of the Little Miss Sunshine beauty contest. So her dysfunctional family head off in their dysfunctional van. She's a fat girl with big glasses about to enter a beauty contest. At one point Olive says, 'I don't want to be a loser because Daddy hates losers.' Her father is a failed motivational speaker and his conversation consists of clichéd aphorisms that berate people for being losers. The irony, of course, is that he's a loser and his family are losers. At one point he says, 'There are two kinds of people in this world: winners and losers.' On the word 'losers' the camera pans round his family: his foul-mouthed father, his suicidal, homosexual brother-in-law, his son who refuses to speak, his down-trodden wife, desperately trying to hold them all together, and himself, the failed businessman who can't face his failure. And they're thrown together in a VW van, which is itself dysfunctional – the door falls off, the horn is constantly on and they must push start it every time.

I sometimes look round my congregation and see a bunch of dysfunctional people thrown together, somehow managing to be family. And I smile at the ridiculous grace of God. There's a moment in the film when they suddenly realise Olive isn't in the van. They've left her behind at a gas station. We see the van moving across the screen in one direction and they whisk her up into it, without stopping (because if they stop they won't be able to restart it). Then we see the van moving back across in the other direction and we hear the father's voice: 'No-one gets left behind, no-one gets left behind.' That's the church: the place where no-one gets left behind.

We live in a graceless culture. A culture of competition in which we're all trying to get ahead. A culture of insecurity in which we're all trying to prove ourselves. A culture of spite in which we hold grudges, envy success, protect ourselves. In this culture our shared meals offer a moment of grace. A sign of something different. A pointer to God's coming world. 'Life in the kingdom,' says Peter Leithart, 'demands that we adopt a new set of table manners, and as we observe this etiquette, we become increasingly civilised according to the codes of the city of God.'² Around the table we offer friendship and celebrate life. Our meals offer a divine moment – an opportunity for people to be seduced by grace into a better life, a truer life, a more human existence.

Jesus ate meals with people. If we routinely share meals and we have a passion for Jesus then we'll almost certainly end up doing mission. It's not that meals alone save people; people are saved through the gospel message. But meals create natural opportunities to share that message in a context that resonates powerfully with what we're saying.

It's not that meals alone save people; people are saved through the gospel message. But meals create natural opportunities to share that message in a context that resonates powerfully with what we're saying.

One of the great things about mission through meals is that it enfranchises the people of God. We don't have to understand missiological jargon or hold a crowd with our oratory. We don't even need to be able to cook. We just need to be people who eat and people who love Jesus.

I'm not suggesting adding something new to your all-too-busy schedule. You already eat three meals a day – that's twenty-one ready-made opportunities each week to do mission and community. You could meet up with another Christian for breakfast on the way to work – read the Bible together, offer accountability, pray for one another. You could meet up with colleagues at lunchtime. You could invite your neighbours over for a meal – better still invite them over with another family from church. That way you get to do mission and Christian

community at the same time – all the while letting your unbelieving neighbours see the way the gospel impacts our relationships as Christians (John 13:34-35; 17:20-21).

Francis Schaeffer says, ‘Don’t start with a big programme. Don’t suddenly think you can add to your church budget and begin. Start personally and start in your home. I dare you. I dare you in the name of Jesus Christ. Do what I am going to suggest. Begin by opening your home for community. You don’t need a big programme. You don’t have to convince your session or board. All you have to do is open your home and begin.’

Notes and References

1. Robert J Karris, ‘Eating Your Way Through Luke’s Gospel’, Liturgical Press, 2006, p14.
2. Peter Leithart, ‘Blessed Are The Hungry: Meditations on the Lord’s Supper’, Canon Press, 2000, p117.
3. Francis Schaeffer, cited by Drew Goodmanson in ‘Gospel Hospitality: Making Room’, 2nd September 2007, www.kaleochurch.com/se.

Editor’s Note: This article is based on the author’s book ‘A Meal With Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community and Mission Around the Table’ published by Crossway. The article is reprinted from the UCCF supporters’ magazine with permission.

Recent Committee Meetings & Prayer Days

Tony Fletcher and Paul Darley

The CiE met on 9th October 2010, 26th March 2011 and 21st January 2012 for committee meetings, and on 15th January 2011 and 29th October 2011 for days of prayer, in each case at the home of Paul and Ann Darley. Each meeting opened with a ‘thought’ from God’s word. The committee meetings followed with a time of pray for the business

of the meeting and for Christians involved with engineering. The days of prayer focused on seeking God's wisdom for the future of the CiE in addition to praying for Christians involved with engineering.

On moving our administration from Christians at Work to TWUK in 2010 we made a parting 'thank you' donation to Christians at Work. Jayne Payne of Transform Work UK (TWUK) has been helping administer CiE, and the committee invited her to become CiE's treasurer. Her kind acceptance not only relieved Tony of this task which he had been undertaking as well as his other work as Secretary, but gave us the benefit of her experience and insight on the committee.

Our main concern at these meetings has been how to increase our membership and serve it better. We have also felt it necessary to ask the Lord and ourselves whether there a real need for Christians who are in engineering to stand together. We have considered the future possibilities for CiE including remaining as at present, becoming a 'member section' of another organisation, merging with another organisation, or disbanding. Paul has been talking to Christians in Science about possible options for working together.

Tony followed up a talk by Adrian Miles at a TWUK conference on a Christian approach to workplace stress. It was agreed that we should form what he had written into a booklet rather than a Journal article, and TWUK took on this task for us and the booklet (which includes an advert for CiE) is now available at no cost to any who would like a copy.

Summary of 2011 Accounts

Opening balance 1st January 2011		£2,128.90
income from subscriptions	£270.00	
income from donations	<u>£160.00</u>	
Total income	<u>£430.00</u>	
expenses for TWUK	£1,023.00	
expenses for stress booklet	<u>£25.00</u>	
Total expenditure	<u>£1,048.00</u>	
Closing balance 31st December 2011		£1,510.90

christianengineers.org.uk